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ABSTRACT

The major premise of this paper is that morale in retirement is achieved through involvement in intellectual, social, and physical experiences which are meaningful to the person and his social milieu. The paper posits that these experiences are to be found in continuing education. Presented are 12 hypotheses dealing with old age and the process of aging. Included are descriptions of three operational systems for delivering educational programs to older adults, and reaction statements from people involved in these programs. (Author/LKP)

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SCHOOL BELLS ARE RINGING FOR GRANDPARENTS

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Growing old has always been the concern of man. Whether by design or circumstance Methuselah became an old man:

METHUSELAH

Methuselah ate what he found on his plate,
And never, as people do now,
Did he note the amount of the calory count;
He ate it because it was chow.
He wasn't disturbed as at dinner he sat,
Devouring a toast or a pie,
To think it was lacking in granular fat
Or a couple of vitamins shy.
He cheerfully chewed each species of food,
Unmindful of troubles or fears
Lest his health might be hurt
By some fancy dessert;
An he lived over nine hundred years.

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According to some writers there is no reason why modern man can't expect to rival Methuselah's record, minus a couple of centuries. As of today we are not doing a bad job of stretching out our life span. For the first time in the history of mankind we are outliving our jobs by a decade or more. We now call this freedom from labor by the frightening name, "Retirement." As one set of scientists improve the technocracy of production and distribution, and as another set of scientists extend the life span, we may find ourselves with about as many years in retirement as in the work force. Should this happen it might be that the idea of eternal life will lose some of its appeal, judging from our present suffering with the boredom of an extended weekend, the reckless uses of our vacations, and the actual deterioration of personalities

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in a world where men work no more. As long as aging is equated with occupational obsolescence we will have problems.

The dilemma of aging is not a new social phenomena. Aristotle,[1] in his essay "Youth, Age, and the Prime of Life" wrote of the elderly,

> They have lived many years; they have often been taken in, and often have made mistakes; and life on the whole is a bad business. The result is that they are sure about nothing. . . They think but never 'know'. . . they are cynical. . . they are distrustful and therefore suspicious of evil. . . they neither love warmly nor hate bitterly. . . they are small minded. Because they have been humbled by life; their desires are set upon nothing more excellent or unusual than what will help keep them alive. . . they live by memory rather than hope; for hope is of the future and memory of the past.

Aristotle put his nimble fingers right on the prospects of many modern men. After describing the sorry symptoms of age he identified the cause of dispair when he wrote, "Because they have been humbled by life. . . Who is there amongst us who looks upon retirement as other than an humbling experience? What are the alternatives to these revealing cliches: "on the shelf, out to pasture, just not needed anymore?" Do we view with joy the coming of the day when we hang up the apron, put away the tools, close the desk drawer, wipe the memo pad clean of appointments, say our goodbyes and turn our backs on "life?" Or, do we turn our faces

toward a new life that is brim-full of soul-rewards? Aristotle did not find it so.

As usual, however, there are two or more ways of looking at the same issue. Plato, for instance, writing in "Guardians of the Republic," says.[2]

> There can be no doubt that the elderly must rule the younger. . . let us note among the guardians those who in their whole life show the greatest eagerness to do what is for the good of their country, and the greatest repugnance to do what is against her interest.

In this day of doubting what is good and right, when the elders in the humility of retirement have muted their voices, when youth demands answers and present only non-negotiable demands, what can we expect but turmoil?

Perhaps Cicero has the answer for us as to why older people have apparently retreated from the battle to keep our country great. He had Cato say.[3]

> I find that the reasons why old age is regarded as unhappy are four: one, it withdraws us from active employments; another, it impairs physical vigor; the third, it deprives us of nearly all sensual pleasures; and four, it is on the verge of death.

But, then, after Cato's recitation of what in modern day literature we call the theory of disengagement, stated so well by Cumming and Henry,[4] our ancient philosopher continues:

> Old age withdraws us from active employments. You mean, do you not, those that involve youth and vigor? Are there no old men's employments which are carried on by the intellect even when the body is feeble?. . .Were old men like Fabricius, Curius, Coruncanius not employed when their wisdom and influence were preserving the commonwealth?. . .there is nothing, then, in the argument that old age is devoid of useful activity. He may not be doing what younger people do, but what he does is better and more important. Large affairs are not performed by muscle, speed, nimbleness, but by reflection, character, and judgment. In old age these qualities are not diminished but augmented. . .rashness belongs to blooming youth, prudeness to old age.

Encouraging words are these of Cicero--a tonic after the nitty-gritties related by Aristotle. But these were the ideas of men who lived thousands of years ago. Let's come closer to our days for a look at a perspective on aging. That prolific writer, Charles Lamb, whose essay on roast pork still makes me salivate, had some penetrating thoughts about aging in his essay: The Superannuated Man. As the industrial revolution was just at the dawning he wrote of his own retirement:

> I am no longer a clerk to the firm of. . .--I am Retired Leisure. I am already come to be known by my vacant face and careless gesture, perambulating at no fixed pace, or with any settled purpose. I walk about; not to and fro. They tell me, a certain cum dignitare air,

that has been buried so long with my other good parts, has begun to shoot forth in my person. I grow in gentility perceptibly. When I take up a newspaper it is to read the state of the opera. . . I have done all that I came into this world to do. I have worked task work, and have the rest of the day to myself.[5]

Time marches on. In the early years of our own century the tenor of the theme of aging changes from I, a man grown old, to we, an army of older people larger than all of the legions of Caesar or the divisions of the allies in all of the wars in which our nation has fought. A sub-culture of aging is emerging: older people are conspicious because there are so many of them; old people are important because they have so much to give; old people are demanding because their needs are so acute. Institutions are being erected to accept the gifts they bring; to provide the sustenance they require. Leo W. Simmons says it well when he writes:[6]

> A rich and ripe old age is not guaranteed by nature for anybody. Success with the last of life is a distinct achievement, and it constitutes a two-way relationship. On the one hand, the environment must permit it, and the culture must promote for and sustain it. On the other hand, the aging person must fit in and fulfill his functions within the social setting. Thus a good old age must be active and going to as near the end as possible. The chief means of security and success in aging are by expedient adjustments to other persons and to the social systems within which they live.

Modern man has a hard time coming up to the inference by Cato that there must surely be ". . . old men's employments which are carried on by the intellect even when the body is feeble. . . "We seem to be so overwhelmed by the so-called, and probably mis-judged, Protestant Ethic of "work for the night is coming" that little else in all of life matters very much. Almost all discussions on social roles for older people focus on their functions as "productive" members of society in which it is clear that the economic concept of productive is of uppermost importance. Such a prominent socio-gerontologist as Erdman Palmore concludes his discussion of the sociological aspects of aging[7] with these remarks, ". . . American society will develop new roles for the aged and expand their present useful roles." He then identifies these projects as fitting his definition of useful roles: Foster Grand Parents, Project Find, and Project Green Thumb. These are above reproach, of course, but he then continues, "The idea that society can provide only a limited number of jobs, and that therefore it cannot possibly provide enough jobs for aged workers, is no longer accepted by most modern economists" and then he continues "society could create a useful role for every adult if it were willing to devote the necessary attention and resources to this end. . . there is an unlimited number of goods and services needed and desired in American society." This is a great manifesto, but is it comprehensive enough to include the large affairs performed by reflection, character, and judgement of Cato's plea?

The answer to the question based upon Cato's premise about usefulness in older years may be found in the major premise of this study which holds that high morale in retirement is essential to maximizing life for as long as we live. By definition morale is a state of zeal, cheerfulness and confidence which is achieved by becoming involved intellectually, socially and physically in experiences which are meaningful to the performer and his social reference groups. As Palmore states,

> On the question of whether activity is related to high or to lowered morale and life satisfaction, the evidence is overwhelmingly on the side of the activity theory. . . When activities remained high or incessant (in the Duke longitudinal study), life satisfaction tended to remain high or increased, and when a person reduced activities his life satisfaction tended to decrease. Most other investigators have also found a positive relationship between activity or social interaction and morale or life satisfaction.
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> Most of the evidence, then, supports the activity theory: continued engagement (we use the term "involvement") appears to be typical of the majority of normal aging persons; . . .the amount of activity is strongly related to past life-styles and to external factors; and, most important from a practical standpoint, maintaining activity is usually associated with more successful aging and life satisfaction.[8]

A second premise of this paper is that the problems of old people who are lost in the maze of a youth-oriented, work valued culture, which

apparently has no place and little use for them, is in the development of their own way of life--an aging sub-culture. The ingredients for this are already emerging according, to Rose and Peterson. They point out that a sub-culture may develop within any population group when two sets of conditions are present: 1. The members have a positive affinity for each other on some such basis as gains to be had from each other, long-standing friendships, common backgrounds and interests, common problems and concerns.[2] The second condition is exclusion from interaction with other population groups to some significant extent.

An aging sub-culture will facilitate involvement in that it is based upon interaction within the cohort group on the one hand and the loosening of ties with other generations on the other. Freed from competing with the young it is now possible for older people to devote their talents and energies to their own interests. This is twice good in that it may make old age a virtue to be sought by younger people; it may be good because once old people become group and status conscious they will find that they are an enormously powerful group. With this power they may serve the whole of society so well that old age becomes the status symbol in our culture, and society will base its value system on retirement life rather than on work. This trend is already discernible in the growth of leisure as an accepted and sought for value in the patterns of work and expenditures of the nations blue and white collar laborers. It might well be that the swinging pendulum of social organization is moving away from the youth culture of the present toward a time when the

elders emerge once again as the captains of our ways. This is the position of Wheeler[10] who. . . describes 1995 as characterized as an age-centered culture in which youth compete with each other for the privilege of growing old where, men will depend upon the wisdom of the aged, and where new vistas of freedom hitherto unimagined will exist.

There probably will be some controversy over the idea that older people should become the rulers in our society as they have in others throughout history. Certainly, we cannot find much evidence to support the belief that youth should trust no one over thirty. Hamlin, in his "Utility Theory of Aging" has made a useful contribution to understanding older people caught in the conflicts of our times. He poses two questions: 1. Who needs the older persons? and 2. Why does the individual need old age? And in answer he proposes these hypotheses:

1. As a culture develops the life-span increases.
2. If the utility of wisdom should ever receive social sanction, society will use younger men less and older men more. Already men are working ten years in a period once classed as senescence. A technological society has little use for young muscles and more use for old men.
3. Senility and death come because a program of energy utilization is essential to maintain the organism. Without a program chaos results in both the biological and psychological systems. These

are the precursors of disintegration and death.

4. Generalized breakdown occurs at that age when the current culture prevents the aging person from formulating and engaging in a social task or function.

5. Social evolution sets limits for human behavioral programs just as Darwinian evolution does for physiological programs.

6. The dominant programs in adult life are behavioral and are built in by cultural evolution. These programs are not time-limited; they play the major role in motivation.

7. Adults seek opportunities to use energy in the service of an established behavioral program or task. Task is defined to be the meaningful use of time and energy.

8. If the older person has a need for years beyond 70, he will retain competence and live longer.

9. As the amount of energy available in the aging organism declines the efficiency of energy utilization increases.

10. Revision of programs, with efficient new learning, continues much later in life than was once supposed. Competence disintegrates only when the behavioral programs run out.

11. Comprehensive judgment roles may be the most promising for continued competence in old age.

12. Cultural evolution which permits the exercise of comprehensive judgement requires a program. This program builds behavioral

programs into the individual which attain ascendancy during later life. Such behavioral programs maintain the physiological "ready state." The organizing agent in an energy system is utility.

We now leave the theoretical constructs and move to actual systems for delivering educational programs to older adults. Because of time constrictions we shall pass over the many excellent developments in senior citizens centers and concentrate on where School Bells Ring for Grandparents.

The Herman L. Donovan Fellowship for Senior Citizens, a living memorial to the late president emeritus of the University of Kentucky, provides a tuition-free college education to qualified people over 65. Since its inception in 1964, enrollments in the program have totaled 893 on the Lexington campus and several hundred at the fourteen community colleges in the University system. The program has no geographic restrictions. Donovan Scholars study everything, literally from A to Z in the University's catalog. Most register as auditors but many earn credit in their courses. Two have been graduated with baccalaureate degrees, one with a masters, and several are in the wings waiting for Commencement this May. Those who register for credit do very well; their earned average is 2.39 against 2,41 for all students. Their attendance record is excellent--often the Donovan Scholars make it to class when the young students can't face the storm.

Donovan Scholars are persistent. One man from California demanded the right to purchase a plane ticket to Lexington at the half-rate student fare.

his request upset the establishment so much that it finally came to the personal attention of the company president. He provided a first-class ticket with the compliments of the company to the man.

Many Donovan Scholars are people of high distinction in their pre-retirement and past occupations. For example, one woman, the widow of a former missionary to India, completed her work career as a teacher by a tour of duty with VISTA. Another who was a professional girl scout executive now studies creative writing and has had a number of her works published. The former manager of a pulp-wood company divides his time between study and volunteer service at the Comprehensive Care Center. In her youth she was a ballerina with the Ziegfield Follies but now as a woman in her seventies, this Donovan Scholar devotes her time to international students and, unofficially, as a housemother to the girls who live in the university house where she has an apartment. Others were farmers, clerks, teachers, wives and mechanics.

A recent announcement about the Donovan Fellowship in the bulletin of the American Association of Retired Persons and the National Retired Teachers Association has brought a wave of hundreds of inquiries about the program from across the country. Older people do want to go to college. Listen, "as I hold both B.A. and M.A. degrees, I am not interested in working for a degree but am interested in studying both fiction and non-fiction writing." A retired teacher approaching my seventy-third birthday, I have served with Peace Corps in Nigeria and with VISTA in New Mexico and California." Or hear this, "I have not quite reached that age (65) yet. . . I consider

retirement not as 'away from something', but rather 'into something'." She continues by writing that she wants to work on a masters degree in creative writing. Another person writes requesting information about studying for a doctorate in Early Childhood Education.

The Herman L. Donovan Fellowship is available to people from every state and country. But rather than building up a big program at the University of Kentucky we would much rather help other colleges and universities to develop similar programs--as living memorials, perhaps, or because the institutions recognize their obligation to provide life long learning; and their indebtedness to people who have now grown old but upon whose labor and support the institutions have served and prospered.

The Donovan program does not require cash; it merely opens the doors to classes on the basis of available space. Every college and university can do as much or more than the University of Kentucky.

Another delivery system is known as Continuing Education for Older Adults. This is a series of courses covering a sixteen hour time span, usually eight sessions of two hours each. It is organized by the community colleges with participation by local planning committees and technical assistance by the Council on Aging. The curriculum is planned at the local level on the basis of informal surveys of interest. Leaders, all volunteers, are supplied by local, state and federal agencies serving the community: Social Security, Health and Mental Health, Economic Security, Library Science, University of Kentucky, Farm Bureau, Federal Housing Administration

and the like. Many lay and professional leaders are used: craftsmen and hobbyists, ornithologists, lawers, physicians, veterans, visitors, historians, editors, teachers and preachers--the list is endless.

The format of the classes are relaxed but it is structured in terms of meeting times and places, use of good learning techniques, and daily and course summaries. The most used evaluation technique is the personal diary. The content of the course at one community college for the 1971 spring semester is: Your Social Security, American M.D.s in Asia and Africa, Kentucky Wildlife, Development of Man, Drugs, Your Kentucky Heritage, Your Greatest Concern and, of course, the traditional pot-luck supper presentation of certificates on the final night.

The value of Continuing Education may be sampled by these remarks from the diaries of some participants in a recent program. "As a person over 65--this course has given me special meaning for the years ahead. . . . . The gap must be bridged between young citizens thinking and old timers resistance to change. . . for the citizen who has worries, doubts or optimism about the aging process, this course should be of very special benefit to them." One person introduced her diary by these words, "My short period of college. . . I enjoyed listening to each speaker and each class." Here is one especially delightful remark, "To me this course has been like a good drink of cold water when you are as thirsty to know so much. . . We have been so fortunate to have such fine teachers and speakers." And then this, "No matter what the age is, a person never grows too old to learn. If the learning we do is good, then any extra learning will bring some of these benefits: 1. You will know

more about yourself. 2. You will know more about the world. 3. You will be a more capable person. 4. You will be more like the person you have the possibilities of being. . . 5. You will enjoy living more." And finally, "Why are we here? It is very common to hear elderly folks say they are too old to learn. But this idea has been exploded by this term of college instruction."

Continuing education, according to the Kentucky format, is so easy to organize because people want to learn, it is so practical because there are no or very few costs, it is so simple because it is not institutionalized out. It is recommended for all communities.

Another delivery system at the University of Kentucky is The Writing Workshop for People Over 57. The purpose of the Workshop is to help people tell their stories well in poetry and fiction, to write non-fiction articles or adapt their stories to radio, television and films. The Workshop is jointly sponsored by the Council on Aging, Department of English, University Extension, Summer School Program, League of Kentucky Pen Women and the Lexington-Leader Publishing Company. Enrollment is limited to 50 people, selected on the basis of the manuscripts which they submit to the staff. These manuscripts are later used in class discussion and personal interviews with the teachers.

Now in its fifty year the Workshop has special meaning to many participants. Of it one has written, "There was inspiration, companionship, and much information on writing to be had. All one had to do was absorb and ask."

another wrote, "I can foresee development--not stagnation--of older individuals who fit into such workshops". And then another, the mother of eight and the help-mate of her farmer-husband, wrote this recently, ". . . how rapidly I have run since the workshop set my feet on the right path. I signed the publishers agreement for my sixth book since March 1970. It seems unbelievable to me".

There are other delivery systems of great importance but the tyranny of time is a cleaver with a sharp edge. The Institutes of Lifetime Learning of the American Association of Retired People and the National Retired Teachers Association must be mentioned. So also is the emerging program of voluntary service under the direction of the National Center for Voluntary Action in Washington. Then, of course, there are many programs supported by state commissions on aging. Sometime soon, it is hoped, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) should become operational.

Summary:

The major premise of this paper is that morale in retirement is achieved through involvement in intellectual, social, and physical experiences which are meaningful to the person and his society. We submit that these experiences are to be found where School Bells Ring for Grandparents.

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